

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

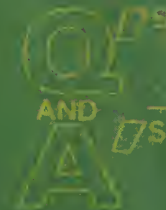


1  
Ag 848 ru  
copy 2

# Community Improvement through resource conservation and development

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
PA 1077

June 1974



---

community  
improvement  
through resource  
conservation and  
development

## What is RC&D?

RC&D stands for Resource Conservation and Development. Specifically, an RC&D project is a local project, usually covering several counties, in which residents work to improve their economy and the environment through the conservation, development, and better utilization of their natural resources. RC&D places heavy emphasis on natural resources. Projects often include building a health clinic, a school, or a road. They can include training programs or historical preservation. Nevertheless, the main way RC&D projects improve communities is by working with the natural resource base.

## Why the emphasis on natural resources?

Utilization of the resources at hand, both natural and human, is central to the RC&D approach. Many resources are renewable—that is, they continue to replenish themselves if given good management. Communities can get immediate benefits from developing such resources and continue to get the same or greater benefits year after year by conserving the resources as they develop them. It's often said that RC&D projects create jobs. In reality the job opportunities are already there in the natural resource base, waiting to be developed.



# Q A

## How can resource development provide more jobs for area residents?

Either by expanding the existing economy or by stimulating new economic growth. Irrigation, for example, can add millions of dollars to farm income in some areas. Developing a dependable water supply, or protection from flooding, allows new industries to locate. The resultant factory payroll supports additional jobs in the service industries. By improving the economy, the environment, and the community facilities, an RC&D project area becomes a place where people are able to work and want to live. Native sons and daughters, gone off to college, can return to find opportunities in law, medicine, education, banking, and business right in their own hometown.

Members of Future Farmers of America volunteer to help revegetate an eroding roadbank. Flowering crownvetch will provide a thick protective cover. Mulch and fast-growing ryegrass will protect the soil until the crownvetch is established. (Endless Mountains RC&D, Pennsylvania)

## Is RC&D a federal program or a local one?

Local. Decisions are made by the local sponsors. Conservation districts and county governments (or town governments in New England) sponsor these projects. Additional sponsors can include municipalities, state agencies, comprehensive planning agencies, and local nonprofit organizations. But RC&D projects also receive federal funds and technical assistance. Leadership within U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the RC&D program is provided by the Soil Conservation Service.



## How do you start an RC&D project? How are project boundaries defined?

Suppose a conservation district and a county government want to start an RC&D project. They must convince officials of other conservation districts and counties in the proposed project area of the merit of the idea. Together they organize a multicounty steering committee.

The proposed project area should be a natural unit in terms of physical and economic conditions. Although the RC&D program is directed primarily toward rural areas, it can include metropolitan counties in the project area. The RC&D approach can help any community where resources have not been developed to their fullest. It is not limited to low-income areas. The counties included in a project area should share enough

similar characteristics to make planning a reasonable undertaking and the boundaries should be compatible with those of substate planning areas. Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania, the Green Hills of Missouri, and the Color Country of Utah are three such areas, and all three are RC&D project areas.



The West Virginia communities of Jumping Branch and Nimitz and the Mountain-Dominion RC&D Project sponsored this reservoir, which provides both flood protection and a water supply for municipal and industrial use. RC&D funds paid for part of the impoundment and project; a \$51,000 FHA loan financed the local share of the impoundment cost. The reservoir provides water for more than 200 households and businesses.







### What does a steering committee do?

---

A typical steering committee includes representatives of potential sponsoring public bodies and interested leaders. First the committee agrees on some broad problems and needs of the area, particularly those that can be solved through fuller resource development. When a decision has been reached to submit an application for RC&D program assistance, the steering committee helps eligible sponsors organize an RC&D council and adopt a constitution and bylaws. Members of the council are representatives of the sponsoring public bodies and often include a member at large from each county.

State and regional clearinghouses are notified of the intent to file an application. This application describes the proposed project area and presents economic and social data. It describes problems and opportunities including economic problems, needed community facilities, recreation needs, and en-

vironmental and conservation problems. The text is frequently supported by maps, tables, graphs, and other data.

Help in preparing an application is available, if requested, from local field offices of the Soil Conservation Service and other USDA, state, and local agencies and from state and regional planning agencies.

A copy of the application is submitted to the governor (or an agency designated by him) for endorsement. Then the application is sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Annually the Secretary of Agriculture considers all applications and authorizes new projects for planning assistance as provided by the appropriation act for USDA.



**What can the RC&D council do while waiting for the application for assistance to be approved?**

Many things. The RC&D council is in an excellent position to push actions that help meet local objectives if they can be financed by state, local, or private funds or by federal funds other than RC&D program funds. For example, if a public swimming beach is needed, the council may help a county park and recreation board obtain necessary support and funds for its development; private landowners may pay for a reforestation project; the state highway department may rebuild a road; a private foundation may pay for a health clinic. Financial assistance for measures is not available from RC&D program funds nor can low-interest RC&D loans be obtained from the Farmers Home Administration until the project is authorized for assistance and the project plan is completed.

**What happens after the Secretary authorizes the project for planning?**

The Soil Conservation Service assigns one of its employees as project coordinator to assist the RC&D council. Project coordinators are SCS professionals with a broad background in conservation and natural resource management. The council moves ahead to develop its plan for the project area.



Accelerated soil surveys helped Carrboro, a suburb of Chapel Hill, N.C., develop a town land use plan. (North Central Piedmont RC&D)





- A. Bluffs overlooking Lake Michigan were stabilized with rugosa rose as part of an RC&D measure to develop recreation facilities at Peterson Park. Preventing erosion keeps sediment off the beach and out of the lake (Northwest Michigan RC&D)
- B. Rocks, logs, grass, and trees were used in an erosion-control program that will enhance fish habitat along the Betsie River in Michigan. One hundred structures were installed along the stream. The Northwest Michigan RC&D Project backed the work with technical assistance and more than \$100,000 in funds.
- C. The Endless Mountains RC&D Council worked with blue-stone quarry operators, the Extension Service, and Pennsylvania State University to turn a \$350,000-a-year industry into a \$3.5 million-a-year one.



A.



B.



E.



C.



F.



D.



G.

- D. The South Central New York RC&D Council suggested using local timber resources for a prefabricated log cabin industry. Within 2 years, 10 manufacturers were producing log cabin kits and total sales exceeded \$4.5 million.
- E. Civic leaders, like the doctor shown here with a patient, are volunteering many hours after work to make the Mountain-Dominion RC&D Project a success.
- F. RC&D funds and technical assistance helped Colebrook stabilize an eroding bank of the Mohawk River, protecting the river from sediment and improving the appearance of the village. (North Country RC&D, New Hampshire)
- G. Natural camouflage helps least terns at a nesting site near Wells, Maine. The Threshold to Maine RC&D Project also helped stabilize the barren spoil and protect the shore birds from dogs and dune buggies.





### **How does the RC&D council develop the project plan?**

The RC&D council establishes resource committees to inventory and evaluate special areas of interest. One committee may deal solely with problems and opportunities in forestry; another may inventory community facilities and decide what additional facilities are needed; yet another may look at the area's wildlife, finding ways to improve the area for fish and game. There may also be committees for human resources, industry and transportation, and whatever else the council decides is needed.

The council requests advisory assistance from local, state, and federal agencies; private organizations; and individuals. Upon request USDA agencies provide technical advisors to assist the council and its resource committees. The council develops a plan that includes background information on the project area and an explanation of problems and opportunities in the natural resource base. Project plans include deci-

sions reflected in a plan of action containing specific measures, priorities, and a timetable for accomplishment.

RC&D efforts are coordinated with those of other planning agencies. In some areas, regional planning commissions already exist. Basic planning data available from commissions often help to speed RC&D planning. In some areas, RC&D councils have provided leadership for the organization of multi-county comprehensive planning agencies. In others, RC&D councils have been so organized that they've qualified to become regional planning agencies.

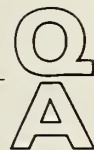
## What agencies provide technical assistance?

---

Any agency that can help. USDA agencies usually include the Economic Research Service, Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, Forest Service, Rural Electrification Administration, and Soil Conservation Service. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Geological Survey, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, and National Park Service may be able to assist the council. So may the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Small Business Administration, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. At the state level the Cooperative Extension Service and state departments, including those dealing with agriculture, natural resources, commerce, planning, health, and transportation, usually assist. And many RC&D projects have re-

ceived technical assistance from universities, colleges, and corporations.

Often agencies assist by providing technical advisors to the council's resource committees. The usual procedure is for the RC&D council to ask all concerned agencies to attend a meeting. At the meeting, the council explains what it expects to accomplish through the RC&D project and asks agencies to designate representatives to serve as advisors to appropriate resource committees.



# Q A

A series of dikes, an RC&D measure, now protects a factory that had been abandoned because of flooding. A men's garment factory moved in, hired 175 people, and is now one of the largest employers in the county. (Mountain-Dominion RC&D, West Virginia-Virginia)



## How do citizens contribute to project planning?

The resource committees are composed of project area citizens. Often resource committees are set up on a county basis, so not only is there a project-wide committee on recreation, for example, but also county recreation committees in Greene County, Blue County, and so on. Whether or not private citizens are members of one of these committees, they can contribute their knowledge and opinions. They can explain what they see as their problems and opportunities and what they want to do about their community's future. For that matter, so can newspapers and radio stations, service clubs, farm organizations, forestry associations, women's clubs, youth groups, chambers of commerce, historical societies, garden clubs, schools—anyone with something to contribute, anyone with civic pride and an interest in his community. Local residents know best what they need, want, and can achieve. It's their community!

## What measures can be included in an RC&D project plan?

Just about anything. Some measures deal with problems most areas face. Other measures reflect the character and needs of a specific project area. The Low Country RC&D project in South Carolina has measures for establishing a tourist reception and information center in Charleston and for restoring, and opening access roads to, several historical sites, including the grave of Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox" of the American Revolution. The Black Hills RC&D Project in South Dakota and Wyoming includes measures to develop an improved variety of Ponderosa pine, to establish a buckskin tannery and processing factory in the city of Sundance, Wyoming, and to mark a campsite used by General Custer's ill-fated 7th Cavalry. An RC&D council can even support the project of some other agency or group. For example, if a county historical society

wants to get an old grist mill declared a historical site, the RC&D council can adopt a resolution supporting the historical society's proposal. Measures like these reflect the individual character of that area. They also reflect participation of local leaders and citizens in RC&D planning.



Unusual air currents at Chandler Mountain allow farmers to grow pole beans earlier in spring and tomatoes later in autumn. The irrigation reservoir in the background, an RC&D measure, helps farmers extend the frost-free season and has increased returns per acre by as much as \$450. (Coosa Valley RC&D, Alabama)



# Q A

## When is the RC&D project plan submitted?

A draft plan is prepared first and circulated for review. The final plan is based on comments and suggestions received from the review. The RC&D council then presents the final plan to the governor and requests his endorsement. Finally, the plan is submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for him to authorize agencies of USDA to proceed in helping project sponsors in carrying out their plan of action.

More than a thousand students, including more than 500 Cherokee Indians, have been trained as heavy equipment operators. Equipment maintenance and repair is also a part of the extensive manpower training program sponsored by the Cherokee Hills RC&D Project in Oklahoma.



## Federal RC&D funds can be provided for what measures?

RC&D funds can be provided for:

- erosion control and sediment control,
- flood prevention,
- farm irrigation,
- land drainage,
- public water-based fish and wildlife and recreation developments,
- soil and water management for agriculture-related pollution control, and
- water quality management.

Low-interest loans may be available from the Farmers Home Administration for some measures.

### Can changes be made in the project plan after authorization for operations?

Yes. New opportunities will become apparent and new problems will arise. RC&D measures can be added or dropped after the project is authorized for operations. Priorities can be adjusted and objectives can be expanded or revised. The RC&D project approach is flexible. Planning is continuous and project plans are open-ended.



### What is USDA's objective in assisting RC&D projects?

RC&D projects fit into the Department of Agriculture's "Rural Development Thrust." By helping local residents conserve, develop, and better utilize their natural resources, USDA helps bring about:

- quality in the natural resource base for sustained use,
- quality in the environment, and
- quality in the standard of living based on community improvement and adequate income.

Achievement of these three goals for all Americans is a mission of the Soil Conservation Service.

As one of the measures in the Threshold to Maine RC&D Project, Ogunquit Village Corporation and York County Soil Conservation District plan to rebuild and stabilize this eroding dune and restore clam flats that have been covered by windblown sand. The measure will also provide protection to the Rachel Carson Wildlife Refuge and village sewage treatment plant. Many federal, state, and local agencies assisted in the planning.



**Issued June 1974**

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1974 O-529-120

---

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402  
Price 40 cents      Stock Number 0100-03185